

The Myth of the Rumah Tusuk Sate in Chinese Culture from a Christian Perspective

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Abstract

A home is the most comfortable dwelling for a family. Unfortunately, it can be influenced by cultural elements, traditions, and myths that bring about unfavorable beliefs. Many assumptions argue that the 'Rumah Tusuk Sate' (House of Satay Skewers) is an uncomfortable place to live due to the negative impacts it may bring, driven by cultural perspectives, traditions, religious beliefs, and Feng Shui among the Chinese community. These beliefs are deeply rooted in culture and traditions, passed down through stories linked to myths. This research aims to explore the underlying causes of cultural factors that influence the perception of 'Rumah Tusuk Sate' from a Christian perspective. This study employs a qualitative method, using library research as the primary source of data, encompassing books such as the Bible, articles, and literature. The Bible, from a Christian perspective, firmly addresses questions regarding the cultural influence on the perception of 'Rumah Tusuk Sate.' Christianity and culture can coexist harmoniously without altering the fundamental concept of faith grounded in the pure Gospel.

Keywords: *Rumah Tusuk Sate, Feng Shui, Culture, Christian Perspective, Chinese Culture.*

A. INTRODUCTION

A home is the most comfortable dwelling for humans to find shelter and gather with family. It serves as both a life organizer and is considered vital for everyone. A home is regarded as a residence, fulfilling the basic need of serving as a place for habitation and family development, whether it is a permanent, semi-permanent, or temporary dwelling. It can be rented or privately owned, each with its unique architectural concept based on the owner's preferences. Ideally, a home should have a deeper meaning, significance, and purpose beyond its role as a dwelling and shelter. A home should provide tranquility, joy, happiness, and comfort throughout all the events in one's life.

Quoting from the article "Planning and Designing an Optimal Residential House" (Rully, 2017); in a general sense, a house is considered as a building used as a dwelling for a certain period of time. However, specifically, the concept of a house can refer to social and community-related concepts that are woven within the residential building, such as family, life, eating, sleeping, activities, and so on.

Since prehistoric times, dwellings or houses have been an integral part of an individual's survival from ancient times to the present. During prehistoric times, early humans created and lived in various places, such as in trees, caves, and rocky crevices. Concrete evidence from historical discoveries shows that prehistoric people, though nomadic, also occupied specific locations and created dwellings according to their

needs using natural resources (trees, caves, rocky crevices), as evidenced by artifacts and fossils. Fossil, which comes from the Latin word "fossa" meaning "dug out from the ground," refers to the remnants or traces of living creatures that have turned into stone or minerals

The reality is that a place of residence, known as a home, is the most comfortable setting to begin life's journey in building the institution of a family. According to Law 52 of 2009 on Population Development and Family Development, Chapter I, Article 1, Paragraph 6, the definition of a family is the smallest unit in society consisting of a husband and wife, or a husband (head of the household), wife, and their children, referred to as a household, or alternatively known as a nuclear family.

In establishing a household and a place of residence, humans have always aspired to have a home as their primary need. Nevertheless, over time and with changing eras, the price of a house is influenced by factors such as its location, accessibility to the city center, building size, design quality, available amenities, land prices, permitting processes, construction materials and skilled labor costs, and the developer's brand (investor). It is not surprising that the price of a house can reach billions and trillions. Property developers are careful in their property development, as a significant portion of the population considers factors such as trust and cultural beliefs when building, purchasing, and inhabiting a house. In this research study, the author highlights the myth of "rumah tusuk sate" (skewer house) among the Chinese community, even if they are Christian, as a belief that is still considered a taboo or superstition.

In Indonesian culture, particularly in Javanese culture, there is a concept known as "rumah tusuk sate" (skewer house). A rumah tusuk sate is a house that is positioned at the end of a three-way intersection. It is often referred to as a sharp and poisonous corner because it resembles an arrowhead and is located right at the intersection. This location is believed to be less favorable due to its association with negative energy. Similarly, in Chinese culture and tradition, the positioning of a house is often linked to Feng Shui as a barometer for the layout, location, and objects within the house, particularly the rumah tusuk sate. Feng Shui (Mandarin: 風水) itself means achieving harmony and balance by bringing peace, prosperity, and creating harmony. Some people view the rumah tusuk sate as having negative energy, while others believe it can be good for business. Feng Shui, according to tradition and belief, is a philosophical and traditional architectural concept from China that harmonizes an individual with their environment, connecting it to destiny and fortune.

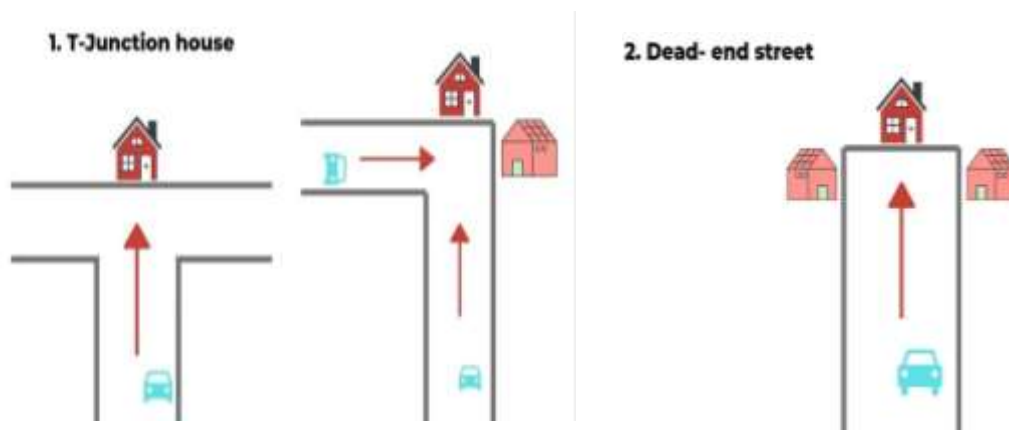
Feng Shui has been around for thousands of years and continues to evolve. Feng Shui is the popular language of the Chinese people, originating from Beijing and later becoming the national language of the Chinese. "Hong sui" is the Hokkien language spoken by the Han Chinese living in southern China. This is similar to the Javanese language for Javanese people and the Indonesian language as the national language of Indonesia.

In Chinese characters, "风" stands for "feng" and means "wind," while "水" stands for "shui" and means "water." The term "Hong sui" comes from the Hokkien language spoken by the Han people in southern China. Both Feng Shui and Hong Shui have the same meaning: "hong" for wind and "shui" for water.

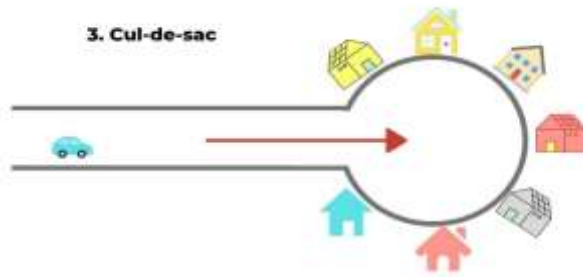
Most people, especially in the Chinese community, believe in the customs and traditions related to Feng Shui, which suggest the presence of energy flows in a location or area that can bring blessings or misfortune. These energy flows are believed to be in harmony with the spiritual forces that inhabit the place, allowing people to live in harmony. Some of these energies are considered beneficial, good, and positive, while others are considered dangerous and negative (capable of causing harm). Feng Shui itself is an ancient topographical science originating from China, and it is believed that there is a connection between humans, the heavens, and the earth that can be harmonized when humans seek positive energy (chi) and avoid negative energy.

Both of these words have the same meaning, with the only difference being the dialect and pronunciation. So, Feng Shui is a study of how humans can live in harmony with the natural environment. This knowledge is widely used in property business by architects in their field as well as on a personal level, but not so much in an academic context in related fields.

When it comes to the "rumah tusuk sate" concept, if the location of a building does not meet Feng Shui criteria, it is believed that misfortunes, disasters, or difficulties may befall or be experienced by the occupants of that house. Even though, on the other hand, the location is clearly less comfortable. For instance, if the direction of vehicles from the road, especially at night, results in the headlights shining directly into the house. Similarly, from a safety perspective, it can be quite risky because if a vehicle is traveling



too fast and the brakes fail, it could potentially crash directly into the house.



<https://picturehealer.com/blog/t-junction-dead-end-and-cul-de-sac-feng-shui>

Many assumptions suggest that the "rumah tusuk sate" as a place of residence is uncomfortable to live in because it is believed to bring bad luck or disharmony holistically. These assumptions are closely related to and intertwined with traditional cultural factors and beliefs that have been passed down through generations. They are greatly influenced by beliefs that have been formed as part of the culture and traditions, often conveyed through stories that are also linked to myths. A "rumah tusuk sate" is located right at the end of a road that also branches off or forms an intersection, and it may also be positioned perpendicular, "stabbing" right at the end of a road junction. If it can be illustrated, the position of a "rumah tusuk sate" resembles the letters T and L. Functionally, the location, structure, and positioning of the "rumah tusuk sate" are considered less favorable. This relates to aesthetic value, functionality, moral value, and philosophy.

From a cultural, traditional, and religious (spiritual) perspective

As cited by various sources, the "rumah tusuk sate" is considered to disrupt the comfort of life and the traditional beliefs of certain ethnic groups, cultures, and communities. This influence has led to the establishment and continuation of beliefs based on traditions, culture, and the resulting customs. These beliefs are sometimes seen as local forms of religion and are also shaped by the acculturation of cultural diversity. According to Harsono (1984:220-221), religion is a part of human culture, and as such, theological and anthropological approaches do not necessarily conflict with each other. According to Leslie A. White, religion, or one of the elements that form religion, namely belief, is a part of the ideological system that shapes the scope of human culture. Culture encompasses knowledge, beliefs, morals, laws, arts, customs, and habits that are shared by people as members of a society. In a broad sense, culture will always be an evolving way of life that is passed down from one generation to the next.

Through this research, the researcher conducted interviews with several sources who are well-versed and knowledgeable about the meaning of Feng Shui and the associated traditions. Most of the interviewed sources were of Chinese ethnicity.

Tabel 1. Data Responden

No.	RESPONDEN		
	Respondent's Name	Description	Time
1.	Ibu Cen Lixian (Vimala Sushanti)	A middle-aged woman aged 78, of Chinese ethnicity, is a Mandarin language teacher	Thursday, June 8, 2023 At 19:35 WIB
2.	Bpk. Tjong Kwan Seng (Suhu Yo)	Middle-aged man, 60 years old, of Chinese ethnicity, formerly worked as a fortune teller (feng shui practitioner).	Saturday, June 10, 2023 At 12:46 WIB
3.	Bpk. Husen Chandra	A middle-aged man, 57 years old, a Buddhist, works as a tax accountant	Wednesday, June 28, 2023; At 20:31 WIB
4.	Bpk. Jong Hengky	A middle-aged man, 45 years old, a Buddhist, works as an IT product consultant."	Monday, September 25, 2023; At 22:00 WIB
5.	Ibu Cen Cing Ik	Middle-aged woman, 36 years old, a Buddhist, works as an entrepreneur	Sunday, September 24, 2023 At 22:09 WIB
6.	Ibu Titin Ningsih	Middle-aged woman, 38 years old, a Buddhist, works as a lecturer and entrepreneur.	Sunday, September 24, 2023 At 22:47 WIB
7.	Ibu Kan So Tjoe	"Middle-aged woman, 68 years old, of Chinese ethnicity, Christian, a church minister, and a homemaker.	Thursday, September 28, 2023 At 20:01 WIB

Feng Shui itself is not the same as what is taught in the teachings of the Buddhist religion. In Buddhist teachings, all goodness is the result of one's deeds (karma), whether they are good or bad. So, matters of fate, goodness, and one's life are not determined by, and are entirely irrelevant to, the elements found in Feng Shui philosophy. According to them, in the Buddhist religion, there is a perspective that Feng Shui is a tradition of a particular nation, a matter of choice that can be followed or not. In practice, the implementation of Feng Shui is highly diverse and varies according to history and region. According to Anderson, it can be fundamentally viewed that Feng Shui can be a way to perceive good and bad fortune as tangible elements that can be managed through predictable and consistent rules. It can even be

described as an egocentric tradition. The study of Feng Shui itself is closely related to the Taoist philosophy that emphasizes the worship of ancestors and spirits. Therefore, it is not surprising that traditional Feng Shui is inherently a form of ancestor worship. Daniel Tong, in his book, *Feng Shui, Chinese Divination, and the Bible* (2008), provides further insights into this.

B. METHOD

The method used in this article employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive research analysis. The subject of the study is based on literature data, specifically books, making it a form of library research. The article utilizes a "qualitative method with a literature approach" as described in Wiley & Sons (2026;42). The qualitative research conducted is scientific, discovery-oriented (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018;8), and academically accountable. To support the accuracy of this research, the researcher conducted a research study based on various primary sources such as the Bible, articles, and books, along with interviews related to the ongoing efforts. Additionally, the research is supported by other literature sources, including the thoughts of various individuals, which the author found useful as considerations and references for the ongoing research.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

When examined according to the Bible in the Old Testament and New Testament, the term "rumah" (house) in Hebrew is referred to as *בַּיִת* (BAYIT), and in Greek, it's called *οἶκος* (OIKOS) or *οἰκία* (OIKIA). It is described as a dwelling place that can also be categorized with other meanings, such as a prison (Genesis 40:4, 14), a land of slavery (Exodus 13:3), the Tabernacle or the House of God (Exodus 23:19; 34:26; 1 Kings 6:1; 1 Peter 2:5), the mortal human body (Ecclesiastes 12:3; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4), and more. However, for centuries in human life, a house has primarily served as a suitable shelter.

Likewise, the religious or spiritual beliefs of an individual have a significant influence on something that is considered supernatural and is often associated with a particular direction. Religion or faith is often related to the religious beliefs of an individual and is generally seen as a reflection of their culture. For example, when someone is deeply religious, they are often regarded as civilized. Conversely, the opposite is also true. Therefore, both culture and traditions passed down, along with the prevailing beliefs in a community, can often cast a skewed view of Feng Shui. Feng Shui is often seen as having a negative impact associated with mythological elements such as bad luck and mysticism. Many Christians, even if they do not belong to the Chinese community, have been influenced by the fundamental premises they have received from their earlier sources of information, which have been passed down to subsequent generations.

Similarly, religious or spiritual beliefs have a profound influence on how individuals perceive the supernatural and its connection to certain directions. Religion or faith is often intertwined with an individual's chosen religion and is generally

regarded as a reflection of their civilization. For instance, when someone is deeply religious, they are often seen as a person of culture. Conversely, the opposite may be true. As a result, both culture and traditions passed down through generations, along with the prevalent beliefs in a society, often cast a skewed perspective on Feng Shui. Feng Shui is frequently perceived as having a negative impact associated with mythical elements, bad luck, and mysticism. Many Christians, even if they do not belong to the Chinese ethnic group, have been influenced by the fundamental premises they have inherited from their sources of information, which have been passed down to subsequent generations.

Perspective of Christian Faith

In the Old Testament, a house is emblematic of various aspects. It symbolizes a place of refuge (Ruth 1:8-9), economic strength, where family members reside, and where children are educated within the family, as described in Deuteronomy 6:7. It is also a symbol that the man holds authority as the head of the family in upholding patriarchal law, the source of authority and representation of the family before God. For example, Joshua represents his entire household when he declares, "But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15).

Furthermore, the house symbolizes the man as the head of the family, responsible both socially and spiritually. A wife leaves her parental family to unite with her husband in one household. This concept underscores the importance of the house as a significant symbol in the Old Testament, representing familial, social, and spiritual unity.

During the Old Testament era, people often chose to build houses using stone rather than mud bricks because stone construction ensured greater stability, particularly for protection against thieves. Stone houses were preferred because of their strength and security (see Joshua 9:10 and Amos 5:11). Houses built from materials like earth or mud bricks were more vulnerable and could be more easily breached by robbers during that time. To enhance the sturdiness and security of their homes, they often incorporated wood from juniper and, especially in the homes of the more affluent, cedar wood (see Judges 1:17 and Isaiah 9:10). This combination of stone and wood made the houses more robust and provided assurance of security against potential intruders due to the solid construction materials.

In the New Testament, there is an account where Jesus Christ calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee (Luke 8:22-25). The power demonstrated and wielded by Jesus in this event proves that the natural elements are entirely subject to His authority and supreme power. This highlights that Jesus Christ is the Lord over the entire universe, to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given (Matthew 28:18). In Christianity, there are no taboos to be avoided as long as they are in accordance with His will. Therefore, all His followers should submit and live in His truth. If even the elements of water and wind obey the authority of Jesus Christ, then every Christian should submit and have complete faith in His sovereignty, so who can stand against us? (Romans 8:31; Ephesians 6:12).

Diligently adhering to and living according to the truth of the Word, as written and spoken in the Bible, is a crucial aspect of a believer's life. Apologetics for a believer is closely related to clarifying and defending their faith, making it justifiable. Apologetics involves defending Christianity against negative accusations, aligning Christian faith with reason, clarifying Christian teachings, influencing the mind, and asserting God's truth, so that faith can be justified. Therefore, there should be no mythological or mystical factors that influence a believer's faith, especially in the establishment of a dwelling or the choice of a home, as long as it aligns with their faith and God's will. This is because there is nothing outside of Christ that can change a believer's way of life and their faith's continuity, as long as they live in accordance with Christ.

For Christians, it is crucial to hold the Bible in the highest regard as a special revelation and the ultimate presupposition, making it the source and standard of truth for believers. This is also emphasized by Frame, who stated, "Scripture actually has a great deal to say about epistemology, or the theory of knowledge." The Bible clearly teaches how someone can attain knowledge (wisdom), starting with the fear of the Lord.

Indeed, a home, as a shelter for a family, should always embody love and prioritize the Lord God. With feelings, thoughts, and an attitude of the heart that place God's will as the top consideration. By learning to love God with all one's heart and being a doer of the truth, a peaceful and prosperous atmosphere will be created in the home, and the Holy Spirit will shelter the lives of believers, regardless of the physical structure, location, position, or how others view the home.

D. CONCLUSION

In practice, many Christians still employ Feng Shui methods and traditions that are believed to be a way of life, and they apply them to various aspects, even in a holistic manner. From a Christian perspective and when applied to Christian education, it is clear that the Bible does not endorse such practices in the sense of being double-minded. Every cultural belief has its own meaning, with values, traditions, morals, and norms, but a believer is not necessarily bound to particular elements and should not base their faith on what the Gospel teaches. Richard Niebuhr, in his book "Christ and Culture," emphasizes that Christ stands above culture. Here, Niebuhr presents his view on Christ within culture with the type of accommodation, which explains that Christians are people who should adapt to culture because Christ came into the world and followed the culture of Israel (Jewish culture), where Jesus followed natural law. As a result, Christians should adapt themselves to the values and principles of the prevailing culture.

Because Christ came into the world and sacrificed Himself as part of God's mandate and mission (*missio Dei*) to be carried out by His only begotten Son (*missio Christi*), who died on the cross with His blood shed completely for the redemption of the sins of all humanity. He received all of humanity to be part of salvation, not based on who is chosen and predestined to be saved, but through universal predestination.

According to the author, the church, in principle, cannot separate itself from the world because God, as the primary initiator and main proponent, carries out His mission in the world by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, as the bearer of peace and well-being (shalom). There is God's mission on Earth through His church so that the Great Commission can reach souls. For this process, each of us who undertakes this mission must engage with the diverse cultures and manifest the love of Christ in the language of culture, traditions, and customs that exist within the community. Our perspective should be sensitive to cultural, racial, ethnic, and specific groups, so that through a persuasive approach, the Gospel can be conveyed by engaging with the local culture.

However, the church of God should boldly and decisively filter culture in any form so that the core and pure teachings of the Gospel are not contaminated by worldly philosophies. The church is an agent of radical, positive transformation to truly proclaim the pure truth of God's Word in holistic values without discriminating against any cultural elements, but still prioritizing Christ as the Supreme Head of the Church with His laws and ordinances as the primary focus for implementation and promotion as the doer of truth. Because in the Gospel, we as believers (who have been justified) are not of this world, so our way of life is not the same as the world's, but we color the world with the pure Gospel. Since the fall of man into sin, every inclination of the heart only produces sin (evil) (cf. Genesis 6:5; Isaiah 59:2). Christ came into the world not immediately proclaiming the good news but using the method of observation with a human worldview. Christ blended with humanity in all aspects, whether it be culture, traditions, customs, or the laws and beliefs of the Jews of that time. However, Christ did not drown and become absorbed in those patterns; rather, He fulfilled them. Christ is the law governing every aspect of life for the people. Correct and proper Christian education should begin in the family, through both parents to their children. The active role of the church should also be the same, being the salt and light in the world (in both micro and macro society). In addition to that, schools also have the same responsibility through Christian education, where Christian religious studies for each student, according to their beliefs, should receive a proportional share to open the mindset of every student to cultural differences, the beliefs of others, and the diversity of ethnicities and tribes. Appreciating and accepting culture as a form of cultural tolerance is an attitude of believers in valuing cultural values, as each individual cannot be separated from their respective cultural elements to which they are bound.

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